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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined teaching culture patterns in two Ontario secondary schools are presented in this paper, with attention given to the outcomes of "balkanization." In this form of the teachers' organizational culture, teachers work in smaller subgroups within the school community. The two schools were drawn from a study of 10 Ontario secondary schools undergoing a provincially imposed mandate to destream grade 9 by 1993. Findings indicate that in the conventional school, balkanization resulted in teacher isolation. In the new innovative school, balkanization was reconstructed in new forms, suggesting that balkanization remains a dominant feature even in nontraditional schools. A common restructuring problem was the failure to confront the fundamental issues of status, politics, and leadership. An implication is that balkanized schools are both symptoms and symbols of the "malaise of modernity." Unless restructuring addresses the assumptions of modernism and the structures that arise from it, balkanization will continue to pervade secondary schools with its deleterious consequences. Because the current system is unable to meet the needs of students in a postmodern society, a radical reconceptualization of secondary schools and curricula are necessary. (Contains 24 references.) (LMI)

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BALKANIZED SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE MALAISE OF MODERNITY

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Introduction

Among researchers and reformers, cultures of teaching are usually described in terms of two broad, and largely exclusive types. The prevailing culture of teaching is viewed as one of isolation, individualism and privatism, where custom, constraint or choice lead most teachers to teach alone, with little sharing of resources and ideas, and even less observation of and discussion about each other's practice.[1] Against this is counterposed a more positive but less common culture of collaboration, characterized by norms of collegiality, where teachers routinely help and support one another, agree on common goals and purposes, engage in frequent professional talk about shared concerns and problems, and (albeit more rarely) work together in each other's classrooms as well.[2]

This familiar picture of the dominant cultures of teaching is not inaccurate, but it is a stark, monochromatic one, offering little of the colour or even shades of grey that would be necessary to paint a more subtle and faithful portrait of teachers and their work. One element of that more complex picture of teacher cultures is a form of the culture we want to call balkanized.

The balkanized form of teachers' culture, like all other forms, is defined by particular patterns of inter-relationships among teachers. In balkanized cultures, these patterns mainly consist of teachers working neither in isolation, nor with most of their colleagues as a whole school, but in smaller sub-groups within the school community, like secondary school subject departments, special needs units, or junior and primary divisions within the elementary school.[3]

Simply working and associating with colleagues in small groups does not amount to balkanization, though. Balkanization, we will show, can and does have negative consequences for student learning and teacher learning. By contrast, there are many ways of working with smaller groups of colleagues in teaching teams, school improvement teams, curriculum planning groups and so on that can be extremely positive for teachers and students. What is at issue here, are not the general advantages and

disadvantages of teachers working and associating together with smaller groups of their colleagues, but the particular patterns these forms of sub-group association can and do often take, along with their effects. Balkanization amounts to more than people associating in smaller sub-groups. In their ideal-typical form, balkanized cultures among teachers and other groups have four additional characteristics.

1. **Low Permeability**. In balkanized cultures, subgroups are strongly insulated from each other. Multiple group membership is not common. Balkanized teachers belong predominantly and perhaps exclusively to one group more than any other. Teachers' professional learning occurs mainly within their own sub-group (the subject department, say), and the nature of that professional learning — what teachers come to know, think and believe — varies considerably between those sub-groups. What teachers *know* and *believe* in one department or division, for example, can become quite different from what teachers *know* and *believe* in another.[4]

2. **High Permanence**. Balkanization therefore consists of sub-groups whose existence and membership are clearly delineated in *space* with clear boundaries between them. Once established, the sub-groups which make up balkanization, along with membership of them, tend to have strong permanence over *time* as well. In balkanized teacher cultures, few teachers move between groups from one year to the next. Sub-group categories and teachers' membership in them remain relatively stable. Teachers come to see themselves as not just teachers in general, but primary teachers, or chemistry teachers, or special education teachers specifically.[5]

3. **Personal Identification**. Within balkanized cultures, people become especially attached to the sub-communities within which most of their lives are contained and defined. In education, much of this comes through teachers' own school socialization, university education and teacher preparation, where secondary teachers especially learn to identify with their favoured subjects, and to see the world from the standpoint of those subjects. The structure of teacher preparation, with its segregation into different stages or panels of specialization, also leads to teachers

identifying themselves early as primary teachers, secondary teachers, or junior-high teachers respectively.

Socialization into subjects or other sub-groups constructs teachers' identities in particular ways. Active membership of these sub-groups within the school setting, adds to these identities a set of assumptions, widely shared in the sub-community, about the nature of learning (is it linear or non-linear; product or process centred?), about workable teaching strategies (frontal teaching, cooperative learning, individualization, etc.) and about pupil grouping (is tracking/streaming necessary or desirable etc.?). Induction into a subject or other subculture is induction into a particular tradition with its own common understandings about teaching, learning, grouping and assessment.[6] Where cross-membership of sub-groups is rare, induction into one tradition means exclusion and distancing from other, different ones. Communication between staff and consistency of expectations among them are the casualties. In this respect, singular identification with particular sub-groups undermines the capacity for empathy and collaboration with others.

4. **Political Complexion**. Finally, balkanized cultures have a political complexion to them. Teacher sub-cultures are not merely sources of identity and meaning. They are repositories of self-interest, as well. Promotion, status and resources are frequently distributed between and realized through membership of teacher sub-cultures. These goods are not distributed evenly, nor are they contested by different sub-cultures on equal terms. Teachers of older pupils tend to receive more status and rewards than teachers of younger ones; teachers of some subjects more than teachers of others. In balkanized cultures there are winners and there are losers. There is grievance and there is greed. Whether they are manifest or muted, the dynamics of power and self-interest within such cultures are major determinants of how teachers behave as a community.[7]

These political behaviours have important educational consequences. Imbalances of power and status between tightly bounded groups make it difficult for teachers to reach common agreement in areas that threaten

their career opportunities, their resources and their conditions of work. When major innovations are introduced, they also divide teachers into supporters who will prosper from the innovation, and opponents who will suffer by it.[8]

These patterns of balkanization are not inevitable, and we will examine some alternatives to them toward the end of the paper. In the rest of the paper, we want to address two issues. First, we will describe two very different cases of balkanization in two secondary schools, to see what balkanization looks like in practice and to understand the different forms it can take. These cases are drawn from a study we have been undertaking of ten Ontario secondary schools of varying types, and how their teachers are responding to a provincially imposed mandate to destream Grade 9 by the Fall of 1993. The first case is of a rather conventional, secondary school — subject-based and academically orientated — which, at the time of the study was less than enthusiastic about the destreaming initiative. The second case is a high-profile, innovative secondary school, newly built, and with staff specially appointed to implement destreaming, to establish *cohorts* of students, each of which would stay together for most of its Grade 9 program, and to achieve a number of other changes in pupil assessment and guidance as well. There are important contrasts between these two cases of seemingly traditional and innovative schools but we will see that these differences are not at all ones of a secondary school that is balkanized and one that is not.

Indeed, for all its innovativeness, our second case of a restructured secondary school has not abolished balkanization and all its consequences at all, but reconstructed and reinscribed it in new forms. This, we will argue, is because the school, like many other schools attempting to *restructure,* has not confronted fundamental issues of status, politics and leadership that are implicated in restructuring and in secondary schooling more generally.

Second, following the case study descriptions, we will undertake a deeper analysis of the context and consequences of balkanization in secondary schools in terms of what, following Charles Taylor, we call the malaise of modernity.[9] Balkanized secondary schools, we will argue, are both symptoms and symbols of the malaise of modernity. Until restructuring addresses the assumptions of modernism and the structures that arise from it, we conclude,

balkanization will continue to pervade our secondary schools in one form or another, along with all its deleterious consequences.

Roxburgh High: Traditional Balkanization

Roxburgh High School opened in 1957 as the second secondary school in an expanding city in the Canadian province of Ontario. Once having a student population of over 2,000 in the late 1970s, at the time of the study, this had settled, through school board allocation policies, to a little over 1300. A document prepared by the school for the purposes of the study states that

> "the community from which Roxburgh draws its students is solidly middle class. Most parents hold down managerial or professional occupations and have high expectations for their children. The student body is overwhelmingly white although recently, a growing number of visible minorities have enrolled at the school."

The school documents its withdrawal or dropout rate at under 2% compared to a regional figure of over 8%. Accordingly, in a system which differentiates between Academic-level, General-level and Basic-level courses in Grade 9, enrolment in general level courses is low, with only 10% of students in English registered at the General level, for instance. The arguably lower status courses of Physical Education, Music, Art, Family Studies, Keyboarding and Technical Education are offered at General level (although they take students of a wider ability range), and are therefore regarded by the principal as *already destreamed*. Clearly, the school is proudly and persistently weighted towards a traditional academic emphasis in its intake, its program and its values. Its inclusion of a program for French immersion students adds to this emphasis.

The principal unabashedly describes the school as a *traditional* one, as do many of his staff. When approaching the school on behalf of the project team, to invite it to join the study, a school board superintendent stated, tongue-in-cheek, that we were looking for an "antediluvian school" and asked if the school would want to be included on those grounds. Certainly, in

staffing terms, the school is a highly stable one. There are 89 other teaching staff apart from the principal and vice-principal, whose median age is 45 years. Teachers' median years of teaching experience is 18, and the median number of years they have taught at Roxburgh itself is 14! A further indicator of the school's holding power on its staff is that 27 (one third) of the staff have taught nowhere else but Roxburgh, and six others have taught there for all but one year of their careers.

Some staff were drawn to Roxburgh by its academic, social and community reputation and, like the Family Studies teacher wanting to move to this city, they held out on other opportunities and "sat tight, waiting for something to fall into my lap." Two of the ten teachers we interviewed had first come to Roxburgh on short-term teacher exchanges, and then stayed! Whatever their reasons, once there, most teachers liked to stay — sometimes even at the expense of career opportunities elsewhere. The history teacher's response was typical. Although attracted to the thought of working in other settings and getting new experiences, he said, Roxburgh

> "feels very comfortable, but comfortable pews are like that!.... I would like to believe that I'm not going to finish out my career here, that I should be moving on and getting some new experiences, too. It's just making that break. The longer I stay, the easier it is to stay."

The Mathematics teacher reinforced this interpretation when he said "once people get there, they like to stay, unless it's a promotion sort of thing."

There were many factors that kept teachers at Roxburgh. Students were foremost among these factors, reinforcing Metz's point that the status and worth of teachers is in many respects defined for them by the qualities and characteristics of their students.[10] The history teacher said the reason teachers stayed "has a lot to do with the comfort, with the students, with the community that we have here that makes up the school!" The Special Education teacher claims that Roxburgh kids are "a cut above the rest" academically, which he hears "over and over again" from itinerant teachers, mental health professionals and others who came to the school. He reiterated the comments of one visitor who said

> "There is a different feeling at Roxburgh. She referred to a couple of things that were happening around. It was December and it was kids singing carols in the hall; teachers joining in a band to play Christmas carols and raise money for charity.... There's a different atmosphere."

In addition to the students and community, the calibre and characteristics of the staff were another reason teachers liked Roxburgh and stayed there. Staff relationships were generally highly valued within the school. As the geography teacher put it,

> "Most of the staff are easy to talk to. Most of the staff accept their role, and not a lot of whining and bitching and complaining.... If I have a problem with a student, I can go to the teacher and talk.... Most staff pull their weight and do the job. And that's what's nice."

The English teacher referred to "the quality of education and that reflects on the teaching staff, the quality and dedication of the teaching staff. That's one of the big strengths." The teachers at Roxburgh, he said, were "supportive, friendly, committed." Staff relationships were a particular strength for the Family Studies teacher who had come from a school amalgamation that had divided staff and created dissonance, "sour grapes" and a poor staffroom atmosphere. At Roxburgh, therefore, she especially valued the "very positive peer relations at this school." Colleagues were "very positive, very helpful." They spent a lot of time after school in classes with kids. There was "a tone of professionalism." "The whole school works together," she said, right through to the secretaries and the janitor.

More than one teacher observed that despite their overall age, 55% of the staff were actively involved in extra curricular commitments with students. As the Math teacher observed, this helped create a good school spirit at Roxburgh High.

We very much want to emphasize these teachers' positive perceptions of their students, the community, and each other. By the proud admission of the principal and many of his staff, the school is traditionally academic in

emphasis. We will also see that in its structure, and in the identification of its teachers, it is strongly subject-based. Powerful patterns of balkanization, we will show, have built up around these subject structures and identities. But the school is by no means an outmoded and uncaring Dickensian sweatshop. Indeed, the sense of community and commitment among its teachers is at least as strong as in many of its more explicitly innovative counterparts.

It is with this clear sense of context that we want to define and describe the patterns of balkanization of a subject based nature which permeate Roxburgh High. Our evidence suggests that this balkanization limits the school's capacity to develop the more nurturing side of its mission (which the Special Education teacher already felt to be strongly present but insufficiently recognized), and to extend this to embrace the needs of General Level students who are not easily accommodated by the school's academic emphasis. It suggests, secondly, that balkanization creates and sustains invidious status distinctions between *academic* and *practical* subjects and therefore between the students who take them, in such a way as to threaten program balance and the viability of self-contained solutions to the *problem* of General Level students. Thirdly, and most importantly, our evidence suggests that balkanization creates and confirms a myth of changelessness in the school, and limits awareness of potential for change that already exists there, by reducing teachers' opportunities to learn from each other.

1. Subject Identification and Academic Emphasis

At Roxburgh High, most teachers identify closely with their subjects, have limited experiences of teaching outside of their subjects, and have developed pedagogical identities that are congruent with their subjects being realized in strongly academic ways. With the length of time that many teachers have spent at Roxburgh, these subject attachments and identities have tended to become not only stabilized but even a little entrenched. In these respects, Roxburgh exemplifies very clearly the qualities of low permeability and high permanence that are two of the defining criteria of balkanization.

Teachers in the school were, in the words of the Math teacher we interviewed, perceived to be "very dedicated to teaching their subjects. I

think the teachers are very content-oriented: the academic side of things." In general, he said, there was a "very high percentage of excellent academic teachers." He himself knew that "Math was always the subject I was going to teach." He excelled in it in Grades 12 and 13, and studied it at university. He was still "quite interested in Math. I enjoy doing Math and teaching it quite a lot." Math was now "all part of me," he said.

> "It's either right or it's wrong, and there's a definite strategy to it. I don't have to be creative. There's a chance to get it right.... and getting the right answers is a certain satisfaction for me."

Whatever shortcomings he might have, this teacher felt that "the... academic side makes up for it. Because the kids feel comfortable in my class. They tend to learn, *if they choose to.* If they're interested in understanding what's going on, they will." However,

> "some kids perhaps just have no interest in... that's a challenge, to make them interested that they've had.... Math has never been easy or useful in their minds. And so you've got a mind set in some students, about Math."

More generally, he felt that

> "Maybe the kids that don't want to learn would do better if they felt more comfortable in a personal sort of way.... I think it goes far beyond just hating Math or whatever. It's more into they don't like school and I'm just another teacher... Math not always usually being a favorite subject for those type of kids. My style doesn't say 'Gee this is neat!'... and I'm not flashy... I do bring in concrete examples and that sort of thing, but that goes to my more structured and orderly way of doing things."

The history teacher listed his subject as one of the main things he liked about his job.

> "Definitely one is working with the whole subject matter. I bring to this job an intrinsically curious mind about things dealing with... politics and history, current events, all that. That

> is just something that comes to me naturally.... So I bring a natural interest to the subject matter."

In many respects, this teacher is not at all staid in his approach to the subject. He organizes visits to Washington so his students can analyze politics with students from other schools. He suspended the program to look at the Gulf War. He "gets excited about the material" and communicates this to his students. But his main teaching style is one of class discussion, he confesses to enjoying being the centre of attention, he is not convinced students are learning when they are working individually, and he confesses to being uneasy when he is not in control. This style appears to suit many of Roxburgh's students but as with the Math teacher, this teacher also experiences difficulty with slower learners, with those who are not so keen about the subject as he is.

The school is built upon strong subject identities with a high academic emphasis, and pedagogies which support that. The decision-making process in which department heads play a central role as filters for decisions, buttresses these subjects still further. At the time of the study, most teachers acknowledged and were genuinely concerned about the fact that General level students were not well catered for within the school. But the solution was to establish a General Level Committee which dealt with the issue as a self-contained problem. What it was more difficult for staff to see, at this point, was the extent to which the fortunes and frustrations of General Level students were shaped by identities, priorities and capacities of teachers that had their anchors in the academic, subject-based domain and in the more purely *intellectual* mentalities of teachers and higher achieving students alike which constituted that domain.[11]

2. Status Differentiation

Differences of status between subjects compounded these differences of status between students. Technical Education and Family Studies were both included in the range of subjects from which we selected teacher interviewees. Both were designated General Level programs by the school, in Grade 9, but were open to Advanced Level students also. In practice though, most of their students were *General Level*. The Technical teacher estimated

that most of his classes were made up of around ten General Level students and three to five other students who were "advanced-level type." The Family Studies teacher observed that because her subject was an elective, "a certain kind of person takes Family Studies," compared to English, where she also does some teaching and where "you're exposed to the academic." She estimates that in the present Grade 9 course, twelve out of eighteen students are *General Level*.

Differences in status of the students and the levels of program they take are reflected in and reinforced by differences of status between subjects which are designated at those respective levels. In Technical Education, issues of status and politics have come to threaten the subject's very viability. The advent and expansion of business studies in Ontario, and the associated provincial imposition of a Grade 9 requirement for students to take *either* Technology *or* Business Studies, has led to sharp declines in the number of students taking Technical Education, and therefore in the size and status of Technical Education departments too.

At Roxburgh, Technical Education began with nine teachers and "a whole slew of shops." Now it has four teachers only. Provincial requirements and falling enrolments were responsible for this, but so too were parents' attitudes, reinforcing the status decline into which Technical Education was already locked.

> "Roxburgh is not, how can I put this, we do not have a lot of students here who want to get a technical education. It's because of the locality. The school's situated in ... their parents want them to be doctors and dentists and that type of thing."

The status problems of Family Studies were articulated slightly differently. Here, the problems arising from the purported practicality of the subject were intertwined with and overlain by strongly gendered associations of cooking and domesticity. In response to a question about the downsides of teaching the subject, the Family Studies teacher replied:

> "I think there's a lot of people at the school who are older and refer to it as Home Economics and still see it as traditional

sewing and cooking. But really family studies involves a lot more than sewing and cooking. I'd like it if they were more cognizant of the subject material."

A little later, she continued,

T "There are about ten or twenty people at the school who say "Home Economics" and see it as a strictly female thing. You get the gender jobs in the staffroom and stuff — "Well, let's get the Home Economics people to do the dishes or the baking! Aren't you guys baking cookies or having pie tasting contests?" Because twenty years ago, I guess that's what the Home Ecs did.

I How do you deal with that?

T Oh well, I correct them when they say Home Economics. I guess that term really bothers me, so I'll tell them it's Family Studies. When they say 'Aren't you baking any cookies?', I'll say, 'well, no, we've finished our cooking component. We only did it for two months. So they'll wonder what we're doing for the next six months of the year so you have to sort of lay your curriculum on the table and tell them it's a lot more than just cooking!

I Is this women as well as guys? Do women tend to understand what you're about?

T The women do, yeah.

I That's interesting

T It doesn't happen a lot, but this is the worst thing about Family Studies. It's a really good area to teach in, but you'll be standing up in front of your classroom or fishing kids out of the hall into the classroom because you're ready to start, and some male teacher goes "Mike, what are you doing taking Family Studies!" The message is, you're the wrong gender.

Given these issues of status and gender, as well as the subject's designation as an elective only, it is not surprising that this teacher should conclude that "we have to work hard to promote our subject."

The potential learning benefits for *all* students of programs of Family Studies and Technical Education are immense. The subjects claim broad relevance to the domains of leisure, technical training, parenting and life management, and have argued for compulsory status on these grounds. Among subject departments, they are in the forefront of attempts to integrate theory and practical experience in students' learning. And despite their lower status, or perhaps because of it, they are, in pedagogical and organizational terms, two of the most innovative subjects — sometimes out of sheer necessity as reductions in course enrolments lead to different grades as well as different ability levels being taught at the same time.

And yet, notwithstanding their strengths and contribution, these subjects remain unchosen by students, ostracized by parents, misunderstood by colleagues and, because of their modest departmental size, possessing little influence in the politics and decision-making of the school. In this way, lower status students are consigned to lower status subjects and courses — and the cycle of marginalization of students and subjects alike is reinforced.

3. Subject Insulation and Teachers' Opportunities to Learn

The influence of balkanization at Roxburgh High also perpetuates a myth of changelessness among its teachers, masks the individual initiative that many teachers possess to improve their knowledge and skills, and restricts the opportunities for teachers to learn from each other — particularly across subject boundaries. One teacher acknowledged that "we prepare kids for university well" but also felt that "we shouldn't be sitting back saying, 'We're Roxburgh, therefore, you're privileged to be here! There are a lot of schools doing wonderful innovative things and we've got to be prepared to do these things too." "Some people on staff," he concluded, "tend to feel that 'This is Roxburgh. The Curriculum is important. We prepare kids for university. And anything that takes away from that is ***Bad***.'" Another teacher, after granting that "there are a lot of very strong teachers," nonetheless, added that she would

> "like to see maybe more of an open mind policy, to try new things and to not feel that everything has to stay the same; that we can change things as we go along. I mean Roxburgh (laughs!) doesn't!"

Another teacher observed that "we've got an aging staff here and not too receptive to trying new things to start with." A fourth teacher was considerably more vociferous. He complained that to some extent, the school "rides on reputation" for being "a good academic leader" which may not hold up as well as 18 or 20 years ago. He continued,

> "Because there aren't many people coming in from other areas, we tend to perpetuate some of these myths. I think they are myths, but as with all myths, I think there is a certain amount of truth and a certain amount of creation that goes along with that.... To go with what a couple of people have told me who have taught here and pushed on to other things, and to use the vernacular, this is a rather tightass type of school compared to some of the others that are around.... People not open to change as readily as I would like them to be. I find that frustrating sometimes, and to be with people... who think that the smallest things are change. In fact, they don't really have a keen appreciation as to what change is. It became a rather insulated type of staff — not unfriendly for the people who are inside it (but) probably a little harder to crack into it. People are good intentioned, but nevertheless, not much change, not much youth. And at times the energy that comes with youth is a little bit lacking."

There is an intriguing irony in this teacher's claims about his colleagues. The school's reputation as an academic leader, he feels, is at least to some extent mythical. Yet, there is evidence that his own attributions of changelessness to his colleagues, may also be somewhat mythical. One colleague, for instance, while recognizing that the school still holds to "traditional values," also emphasizes that "there's an awful lot of innovation going on here; more so than in other schools, in fact." Our interview transcripts contain many examples supporting this claim. This (English)

teacher himself, for instance, while a staunch defender of the English language, who sought to "protect it from deterioration," was also enjoying innovating with computers because "You have to create your own challenge. I don't allow myself to stagnate. I think that's what makes it lots of fun." In Family Studies and Technology, as we have seen, change and innovation was often extensive. The Technology teacher for instance, had retrained several times in completely new branches of technology as the department shrank, had constantly updated his expertise in fast-moving areas like electronics, and had learned to teach multiple grade and ability levels in the class at the same time.

Yet the innovations and changes taking place in specific subject departments were often invisible in the school more generally because these departments and their members were so strongly insulated from one another. A story told by the Math teacher, clearly illustrates the nature and consequences of this problem.

This Math teacher had become interested in cooperative learning. He had been doing "a lot of reading and workshops" on the subject, including professional development sessions on cooperative learning in Mathematics within his own board, six months previously, and another workshop just a month before this interview, outside his board. Cautious about innovation, this teacher, even after exposure to workshops, readings and videos had "tried a bit of cooperative learning" just once, with his Grade 10 computer class. What other people might perceive as a rather small investment in change on his part, nevertheless involved substantial risk and uncertainty for him. This is why.

After conclusion of our first interview and with the tape recorder switched off, this teacher talked about his first practical encounter with cooperative learning. The conversation is summarized in Fieldnotes:

> "I admired his willingness and the willingness of people like him to voluntarily undertake and be interested in change.... His response to this was that it was important to him and he was working on it, but that it was hard making innovations like that alone in a school. He said that it was hard doing cooperative

> learning in a school where you were the only one. He drew the analogy that it was hard being the only teacher in a school who allowed kids to wear hats in class when none of the other teachers did, and that this would cause problems. The same applied to cooperative learning. If all the other teachers allowed students to sit with their friends, it was very difficult as a teacher yourself to insist that there were other reasons for them to sit together, and other combinations for them sitting together.
>
> Even if you explain this to them fully, this still put you out of line with the rest of your colleagues in the school, and the kids' expectations that followed from that, he said. He pointed out that the cooperative learning experience he had tried in his class was mainly successful because of the immense planning he put into it — hours of planning in terms of the combinations of individuals who would be working in the different groups, and playing different roles (it took him five hours just to work out where the students would sit!!). But generally, he pointed out, it was quite difficult because of the extent to which he was deviant in what he expected and wanted, compared to his colleagues."

This teacher was on the edge in terms of making innovation. Like many teachers who make changes in isolation, he felt vulnerable and exposed — open to comparison and criticism by teachers and students alike. His exhaustive attention to planning and preparing for his cooperative learning lesson might be construed as a product of his personal and subject identity — feeling the need to approach things in a "step-by-step", linear way, in the way that many Mathematics teachers do. But it was also a highly realistic adjustment to the challenge of changing alone and to the very real prospects of deviating from wider teaching norms and failing.

Ironically, however, he was not actually alone in his interest in cooperative learning at all. Several other teachers in the school had also indicated in the interviews that they were becoming interested in this area of change. Yet it was only the evening previous to his interview that the Math teacher had discovered this.

> "Last night, I was at a cooperative learning workshop. It was a school board workshop, but they invited some people from here to go.... I didn't realize it, but we've got a group of teachers (in the school) that sort of have an unofficial committee on cooperative learning that they're just starting to work at it. And I didn't even know that!"

The support that this teacher needed to make change and risk failure was already there, not just in theory or outside expertise, but among his own colleagues within the school. These colleagues, though, were in other departments. They were not easily accessible to him and so neither was their practice. As a result, this teacher had soldiered on alone, in imagined isolation. Luckily, he had experienced early success and by accident, within the board, had ultimately discovered the sources of needed support among his colleagues. But it could so easily have been otherwise. Early failure could have led to overwhelming discouragement; criticism could have created retreat and withdrawal. Success at change was being achieved by a combination of personal tenacity and sheer luck; rather fragile components for success! The possibilities for such success were not actively structured into the school's organization, especially in terms of supportive collegial relationships.

The source of this teacher's imagined and real isolation was the school's departmental balkanization. Few teachers were able to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of other departments unless the products and achievements of those departments were very visible — in art displays, band performances, successes in provincial contests and the like. Mainly, they said, they did not really know what went on in other departments. They could only comment on what went on in their own.

Summary

The consequences of balkanization in Roxburgh High were twofold. General Level students and lower status subjects were rather marginalized in the school's emphases and priorities. This led to imbalances in the program and to General Level students having difficulty achieving in ways the school valued. The problem of the General Level students and programs was rooted

in what the school emphasized and valued for the rest. Balkanization also created a myth of changelessness among the school's staff. It underestimated and failed to make visible teachers' own individual interests in and capacities to change. And it created serious risks that fledgling attempts at change would be aborted or defeated for want of shared understanding and support. In short, Roxburgh High's balkanized character meant that in terms of being interested in change, being able to change and being involved in change, it was considerably better than collectively it imagined. What we can most learn from this case is that if a school's teachers are its own best resources for change, balkanized departmental structures tend to deplete those resources by insulating and isolating them.

Lincoln High: Balkanization Reinscribed

Lincoln High is in a community on the fringe of a large metropolitan area and sits amid extensive areas of new housing. It is a new secondary school founded as an experiment to interpret and implement some of the guidelines of the provincial government's initiatives for what it calls "The Transition Years' (Grades 7-9)". At the centre of the experiment is a destreamed cohort system for the first year of secondary school (Grade 9), designed to ease the transition from the elementary to the secondary level. A new school founded on principles different from the accepted norm might be expected to weaken or transform the balkanized structures found in most other secondary schools. In this, our second case, balkanization has not been removed, however, but reconstructed and reinscribed within the school's new structures, leading to important gaps between philosophy and action.

Lincoln High School has tried and is still trying with immense effort and imagination to break the balkanization that afflicts most other secondary school structures, in order to create an education that is more fulfilling, rewarding and academically and socially coherent for its students, especially in Grade 9. Teachers at Lincoln High are energetic, committed and passionate about their work. They consistently commented on the excellence of their colleagues. Even after hours of complaining in interviews about the difficulties, conflicts and frustrations, when one group of teachers was asked

what they would do if the school reverted to a more conventional pattern, all but one said they would hand in their resignations! Their frustrations, difficulties and disagreements are in this sense less rooted in personalities than in the structures and frameworks which surround them.

In this school, however, new patterns of organization ran parallel to and did not challenge traditional subject departmentalization (cohorts versus departments), subject status differences were perpetuated (core subjects versus the Exploratories) and micropolitical factions have developed to deal with perceived inequalities developed in relation to the innovation ("Ins" versus "Not-ins"). The question we want to examine here is: what are the implications of this new organizational structure for traditional patterns of balkanization and their consequences that are found in other high schools?

1. Cohorts versus Departments

Lincoln High has undertaken many innovations in its Grade 9 program, but the central one, organizationally, is the cohort system. The cohorts were established to create homogeneous groupings of students who would take most of their program together, with their teachers functioning as a group and coordinating their efforts. The teachers said they had hoped to function as Grade 9 teachers first and as subject specialists second. In line with this principle, each cohort had a cohort leader who coordinated discussions about students and program. The principal described the functioning of the staff within these cohorts in the following manner.

> The teachers in each cohort meet on a regular basis to discuss items related to their cohort. Sometimes they have a day off as a group to consider student evaluation, and sometimes they meet at noon hours, after school, or whenever they can to develop program, etc. Cohort meetings are where many of the ideas and decisions come in terms of the Grade 9 program

Following the philosophy behind the cohort system, teachers recalled their optimism when the staff had agreed to develop several cross-curricular themes as a basis for instruction in all subject areas in all of the cohorts. However, teachers' initial optimism was quickly undermined by the strength

of older subject loyalties and traditional departmental structures. In the first semester of the school's existence, the attempt to use a thematic approach was modified department by department, with no coordination through the cohorts. Three factors appear to have contributed this lack of coordination. First, the themes were left for the departments and not the cohorts to implement. Second, the position of Cohort Leader was ill-defined. Third, the principal circumvented the individual cohorts and allowed some departments to opt out of agreed upon themes.

When the modifications were discovered, departments which had been continuing with the themes were disappointed and resentful As one teacher said,

> When decisions affecting the content of the curriculum, (for example, the 6 themes as agreed upon by all subject areas) when those were modified as the year progressed, all subject areas of the school were not notified.

Evidently, whatever was decided during cohort meetings could still be overidden by departments. In effect, any initial loyalty teachers may have felt toward a cohort became subordinated to deeper department loyalties. This was demonstrated most clearly when curriculum content came into conflict with the student-centred philosophy of the school. When faced with the difficulties of a student-centred curriculum, teachers tended to revert to subject loyalties.

> Some departments are more tied to curriculum. My point, my perception is, being a pilot project we've been released from that to try something. But, again, it's difficult because you've done things for twenty years one way, or for a lot of years one way, and now you have to change.

Difficulties for teachers arose when they had to reconcile the aims of individualized instruction implicit in the design of the cohort system with basic subject competencies.

> Science? Math? You know, both departments have done tremendous things in this school but they feel most tied to

> curriculum. In Math, the comment that goes over and over is: "They got to have algebra. Kids coming out of grade 10, they have to have algebra." And that's a very strong indication. In Science it's all very, they're very tied to curriculum too.

Ironically, one of the reasons given for the persistence of traditional subject structures and identities was the challenge of showing demonstrable success within the destreaming initiative itself. As one teacher stated,

> Destreaming itself has created barriers between, well no, you could say for a better part that it has opened gates between departments. But I could see that there are barriers that may have not been there before where subjects really need to feel, departments, I don't know how to express this, but there's an anxiousness, an anxiety that we all have to be treating our subject well, and applying it well to the idea and philosophy and so on of destreaming.

Departmental structures persisted in various ways at Lincoln High. As we have seen, departments were permitted to overrule cohorts on decisions about themes. Teachers were also allowed to regroup physically along departmental lines. As the principal put it:

> We had the opportunity to build three specific rooms in the school that are workrooms, separate from the staff room. We also have prep rooms in some of the areas such as science and social science. We did not designate specific rooms to specific subjects, but just allowed teachers to work in any area they desired. We're allowing the teachers to choose where they might like to work and will take a look at how this develops after the first two years. Eventually we'll have more teachers and this will create problems at that time. At the present time, we are letting the places where teachers work be their choice.

When we returned eight months later for the second phase of the study, the patterns of interaction were more clearly defined still. The strength of the departments became even more consolidated. As the school expands,

we would predict just such a shift in the balance of power and influence from cohorts to departments. Opening as it did with Grade 9 and 10 students only, with other Grades (and staff) to be added year by year, and given that the cohort system operates in Grade 9 only, the school's position is shifting from one of small departments operating alongside a Grade 9 cohort system that makes up half of the school, to an eventual pattern of large departments operating alongside Grade 9 cohorts that are the organizational exception to all other grades.

2. Core Subjects versus the Exploratories

The subjects at the school have been divided into two groups: Core and Exploratory. This division is based on the amount of time assigned in the timetable and the importance placed on a particular subject by the majority of staff and the principal. Core subjects which are taken continuously throughout the year program, are English, mathematics, second language instruction, science, social science and physical education. Exploratory subjects (visual arts, dramatic arts, music, family studies and technology) are assigned time in the timetable of around eleven teaching periods each; an arrangement initially thought to be sufficient to introduce students to and allow them to explore a subject as a basis for informed program choices in Grade 10 and beyond.

Whatever its initial intentions, the teachers of the Exploratory subjects nonetheless felt they had been marginalized by teachers in the Core areas. As one Exploratory teacher said,

> "We're on the fringe,... because we would say something and a core teacher who had had that person for, every other day for how many weeks, knew that. And we would say something, our perception if we could remember who it was, and it was taken with a grain of salt. In fact I stopped going to them."

Exploratory teachers recounted numerous incidences of marginalization. Each was used to demonstrate that the content of the Exploratory subjects was considered not sufficiently rigorous by Core teachers who clearly voiced their opinions to their Exploratory colleagues.

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> Oh, there were a couple of comments that I just found so insulting. I said I would never come back to another cohort meeting and I didn't. There was a comment that I'd made about a student; they were putting this student way off to the right of the scale, towards independence and he's Mr. Wonderful, and he's like this and this; and I said: "In my art class, he's at the totally opposite end of the scale". And they said: "Oh well, that's just art". And when someone made that comment I thought: "Oh, I've never had to deal with that before. This is interesting". And I got a little bit angry about it. There was an apology made but still that was the way that we were perceived, at least art was perceived, and I'm sure the rest of the Exploratories were too. "You guys don't really count because you're not part of the core."

Some teachers felt that marginalization did not only encompass discussions about students, but extended to the distribution of resources and privileges as well. Speaking of his efforts to gain extra resources, one Core teacher said that the principal "told us, okay, tell me what your needs are and which was related to the budget, and I received everything I asked for." This was quite different from the experience of one of the Exploratory teachers who asked the principal to clarify the rationale behind differential allocation of resources.

> "And I feel that I've been affected directly by some of the decisions that have been made. When I did approach (the principal) about them I don't think I was really dealt fairly. He listened to me and he nodded - he's a very good listener - but then his responses were very cut and dried and his decisions had been made and that was all there was to it. And there was no real answer, no good reason for the decisions he made. And that bothered me a lot because I said: "I want to know why you made

this decision", and he said: "Well, I really don't know right now. I have to get back to you", and he never did."

The marginalization of the Exploratory subjects was not without benefits. It encouraged teachers to work together in order to maximise their efforts given the brief time allotted to each of them in the schedule. Some collaboration and integration had certainly occurred between the teachers of two of the subjects, and demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of careful cross-curricular planning. The teachers of the Exploratory subjects stated that they now intended to pursue such integration with the Core subject teachers. Overall, however, the differences and divisions between high and low status subjects that pervade most other secondary schools, persisted at Lincoln High. Indeed, their particular inscription within new structures that designated and divided what is core (and central) from what is exploratory (and therefore marginal), exaggerated these differences even further.

3. "Ins" versus the "Not-ins"

A third pattern of balkanization at Lincoln High was a less formally structured one. Teachers themselves described it in terms of a distinction between "Ins" and "Not Ins."

All new schools face problems of creation and establishment, problems for which existing theories of educational change based on schools moving from one state to another, are not particularly helpful. When what is being created is deeply innovative, these problems are magnified. Teachers must create and define novel structures, while simultaneously establishing a culture of working relationships through which the new structures can be developed. This is extraordinarily difficult. One teacher put it like this.

> "In a certain sense, with a new school, you're working with new people so you're trying to develop relationships by even getting to know people. Like those relationships are already sort of established, but here, everyone is sort of trying to decide who everybody is, where everybody stands, what we're all about. But in addition to that, I think there's the relationships of working together with people who a) weren't traditionally working

> together at other schools, and b) trying to do that cross curricular thing. And those relationships are the ones I think that are a little tough and are slow in coming."

There was an ambivalence about how these relationships were perceived. Generally the "staff is really good at supporting each other, and really good at not being afraid to try new things."

> "To me, the sense of community in this school outshines anything that I've ever experienced. We've been here for a year, and that may not be everyone's experience, but it certainly is mine. I feel that I know everybody far better at Lincoln everybody on the staff, than I did at the school that I've been at for a number of years. There's less of a sense of isolation here."

Alongside this sense of informal mutual support though, there was also conflict and dissonance, especially where power and decision-making were concerned. During the first year of operation, factions developed through departmental coalitions to gain access to and control over the decision-making process. In their study of schools engaged in restructuring, Lieberman and her colleagues conclude that conflict is a necessary part of change.[12] This is not surprising because change is a micropolitical process in which competing purposes and interests are at stake. This conflict is normal, not pathological, Lieberman et al. note, but it does need to be addressed and resolved constructively rather than avoided if the change process is to succeed. At Lincoln High, however, the mechanisms for addressing and resolving such micropolitical conflicts appeared to be weak or absent.

> I think the mechanism to air these complaints, to get teachers feeling that they have a voice in what's been happening or some sort of control, power, in what will happen - I'm not sure they're feeling that. I think that's what the frustration is.

Another teacher observed that this failure to address conflicts openly led to factions becoming reinforced and entrenched.

> (One of the teachers) made a really good statement at this session and he (the principal) was there. She said that when things were

> going wrong, people were not, the mechanism for trying to solve these problems was not there and that people were kind of coalescing in little groups and bitching about it.

One notable problem area was the difference between the staff's and the principal's perceptions about how decisions were made. As one teacher put it, "He's not dictatorial because he wants people's input, but only to a certain extent. Draw the line."

One area where a divergence of opinion occurred is the issue of vision and school philosophy. Whereas the principal was given the opportunity to develop a strong sense of the philosophy and the vision he felt was required for a school such as Lincoln, teachers were not given the same amount of time before having to proceed with the practicalities of opening the school. While belief in the principal's philosophy was a criterion used for hiring, teachers made it quite clear that their translation of the philosophy into a vision and the principal's translation were in conflict. While the principal had had some discussion with others concerning his vision for Lincoln, the staff did not have the sense of participating in the development of or of having ownership for Lincoln's publicly articulated vision. As Fullan and Miles note, when educational visions are grounded in the leader's personal and prior vision, they can become not visions that illuminate, but visions that blind.[13]

While it may be easier from the principal's standpoint to make decisions while consulting or seeming to consult with people about particular issues, this may cause staff to feel a lack of significant involvement in the school. At Lincoln High, some of our interviewees certainly expressed feelings of disengagement and exclusion from the decision making process. One younger teacher, for instance, related how she had been given the responsibility of staff representative on student council and, with it, the task of creating a motto for the school — only to find that seven successive mottos which she and the students generated were overturned by the principal! With an air of resignation, she confided that as a younger more junior teacher, she probably couldn't have much influence in her school and perhaps just needed to wait and get older before other people valued her opinion. When asked what impact such exclusion from decision-making has

had on staff, several teachers stated that there appears to be a polarization of staff members. At one end are those who appear to have access to the decision making process and the principal, and those who do not.

This was strikingly revealed in a focus group of four staff members during our second phase of the study. Two teachers talked about the efforts that had been made to acquaint an incoming group of staff with the school and its existing staff. A younger colleague retorted that not only had she not been consulted about the induction of new colleagues, she had not even known the program existed!

Part of the reason for this polarization may have been a product of the principal's initial mandate for and his personal investment in establishing the school. He was selected and given the task of building the school and hiring the staff based on aspects of the destreaming and Transition Years initiatives of the Ministry of Education; and in many respects, the school was established as a showcase of innovation within the Board. The principal, perceived as a strong leader by board staff and by Trustees, selected people with whom he had worked in previous situations or who had demonstrated an interest in the philosophy behind the school. When comparing transcripts of people who had worked with the principal before, with those of people had not, it is the former group who are considered to be a part of what staff called the "Ins". This led some teachers to interpret the decision making process as being concentrated in the principal's office.

Several teachers specifically mentioned the existence of two groups, — the "Ins" and the "Not Ins" — and identified themselves in terms of one or the other. Those who were uncertain could discover which group they were in, as many teachers joked on a staff retreat, by seeing if they had been given rooms with fireplaces or not! The "Ins" had influence. This was felt to be due to the their informal leader being particularly close to the principal. One teacher frequently referred to him as "the hip pocket guy!" Several staff also stated that they felt decisions about issues affecting the whole staff were already made with the input of the "In" group prior to general discussion. As one person stated,

> "It's my impression that there is a core group of people who make decisions for the school. And it's also my impression that not all views are considered, that in some cases things are very directive and pre-decided."

The perceived power structure within the school has affected how committees function. While several committees have been struck to deal with many issues in the school, teachers expressed some concern about the authority of these committees.

> "I think that people probably want to feel that they are more a part of the decision making. You know we certainly do a lot of committee work and so forth. I think there is a fear that maybe we are not going to make some of the changes that staff feel we should make."

Part of the problem may be the perception that "there's no bottom line" and that everything is open for negotiation and can be overturned, even when decisions have been made with a staff majority. In one sense, this process might be seen as exemplifying the much-vaunted change process of integrating bottom-up with top-down decision-making. But this integration was not consistent or systematic. It was not always clear when decisions were bottom-up or top-down; or would change from one to the other! Teachers seemed to feel that anything could be negotiated and developed methods for operating within this power structure. One teacher described an interesting technique some staff had developed to achieve their desired goals.

> "I think in terms of other things I've heard, he apparently, what you have to do with (the principal), is to plant the idea and make him think it's his own. And then come back and ask him about it."

"Not-in" groups described other techniques they used to manipulate the structure to their advantage. For example, the Exploratory subject specialists developed a common front to defend and promote their common interests. Through this, they had gained an increase in the time allotted to their subjects by deciding collectively what time they needed to make their

program work, then going to the principal as a group for discussion, negotiation and approval. The key, they felt, was the solidarity of the group when they made their request, a strategy that was vindicated when the principal accepted their suggestions. In exactly the same way, they also approached the interview team virtually demanding an audience for discussing their common concerns.

Summary

Lincoln High has not eradicated the balkanization of teaching. It has reinscribed it. First, despite the bold attempt to establish cohort groups, the historically, politically and organizationally embedded nature of subject departmentalization continues to exert powerful gravitational forces on any attempts to pull away from that departmentalism — a pattern that has been observed in other cases of school restructuring. As Lincoln High expands and the departments grow, the gravitational pull of departmentalism will almost certainly increase.

Second, the uncertainty of the terrain into which the school was moving, the unavoidable swiftness of the implementation process as the school had to create an entirely new vision and structure instead of changing an existing one, and the system's urgent expectations of success that were embedded in the forceful leadership it appointed, together created another kind of balkanization. This was between those teachers who had ready influence with the principal and those who did not; between the "Ins" and the "Not Ins".

What we can learn from the case of Lincoln High is that attempts to restructure secondary schools which supplement rather than substitute for existing structures of subject departmentalism are likely to prove deeply problematic and perhaps even self-defeating. We can also learn that attempts to impose singular visions on the large, complex organizations that secondary schools are, can divide and blind rather than unite and clarify.

Balkanization and the Malaise of Modernity

As our two case studies have suggested, balkanization remains a dominant feature of contemporary secondary schools, even in those that are striving to become more innovative. Balkanization is charactered by strong and enduring boundaries between different parts of the organization, by personal identification with the domains these boundaries define, and by differences of power between one domain and another. It is an organizational pattern that sustains and is sustained by the prevailing hegemony of subject specialism and its marginalization of more 'practical' mentalities; a pattern that restricts professional learning and educational change among communities of teachers; and a pattern that perpetuates and expresses the conflicts and divisions of secondary school teaching.

The world which high school students are entering today is a post-industrial, postmodern one.[14] This postmodern world is fast, compressed, complex and uncertain. It is a world characterized by sophisticated and rapid systems of communication and the dissemination of knowledge and information which has compressed time and space, brought about accelerated change, and placed organizations under pressures of multiple innovation requiring rapid and responsive change. Second, it is a world in which the globalization of trade, information and communication, along with multicultural migration and constant upgrading and questioning of knowledge, have brought about the collapse of old ideological and scientific certainties — and the collapse with them of certain mandates and programs which teachers and schools could confidently or slavishly follow. Third, the postmodern world is characterized by new patterns of production which make smaller goods more than bigger ones, software more than hardware, services more than things — and which do so in smaller units of enterprise where the scaling down of production and technical abilities to monitor markets almost instantaneously, reduces the need for inventory. These new forms of enterprise are creating and disseminating new patterns of organization whose survival and prosperity depends on anticipation of and responsiveness to changing market needs, and where collaborative teamwork and problem solving maximizes the capacity to respond to shifting demands and conditions.

The challenge of change for teachers in the postmodern world, then, are ones of intensification and innovation overload, the need to define new missions and purposes, the search for justifications for practice when scientific certainty cannot supply them, and the struggle to create and define collaboration and self-management in ways that enhance collective empowerment instead of reinforcing administrative control.

The educational context of change, however, especially at the secondary school level, is a formidable bureaucratic rearguard of unwieldly, unresponsive and sometimes self-serving modern school systems. In the face of the postindustrial, postmodern challenge, secondary schools and their teachers are clinging desperately to a crumbling edifice of what social theorists call modernity.

Exactly how modernity should be periodized is a matter of dispute among social theorists, but most seem to locate its onset around the time of the Enlightenment, the age of Reason. Beyond that, some writers also separate out a further, more advanced stage of modernity, which they call *late modernity* or *high modernity*. This, they place historically somewhere around the mid to late nineteenth century.[15]

If the nomenclature and periodization of modernity are somewhat contested, its dominant characteristics are more widely acknowledged and agreed. At root, modernity rests upon Enlightenment beliefs that nature can be transformed and social progress achieved by the systematic development of scientific and technological understanding, and by its rational application to social and economic life. For Charles Taylor, a fundamental part of what he calls the malaise of modernity is the overwhelming dominance of instrumental reason as the basis for social judgement and planning.[16] Compared to premodern societies, the spheres of economic production and human reproduction within modernity become segregated from one another. The family and the workplace are no longer contiguous. Industrialization brings with it the factory system, culminating in systems of mass production within high modernity. In the words of Max Weber, economic life and much of organizational life more generally undergo *rationalization*.[17] The modern factory system gathers large numbers of workers together in single locations, where time and motion can be finely calibrated and production carefully

regulated through bureaucratic hierarchies of supervision and control. As Alvin Toffler puts it, high modernity is the era of the smokestack. It is built on economies of *scale*.[18] Monopoly capitalism in the first world and state socialism in the second, are the prevailing patterns of economic organization. Within high modernity, state structures become increasingly strong, centralized and interventionist. They take responsibility for supporting, coordinating and intervening in the conditions of economic production and for securing social progress through welfare reforms. One of the most important of these reforms is mass education: a right won by an increasingly franchised populace, but also a trainer of the future labour force and an agent of social order and control.

Modern school systems, as historians like Hamilton and Goodson have noted, emerged as factory-like systems of mass education involving batch processing of pupils, segregated into age-graded cohorts called *classes* or *standards* and taught a standardized course, or curriculum, according to recitation-like pedagogies of question-and-answer plus seatwork.[19] These systems of mass elementary education, for a massified society with vast labouring classes, were supplemented by more selective systems of state secondary education for commercial and social elites. With the expansion of equal opportunities alongside mounting concerns about unskilled labour forces, uncompetitive economies and shortfalls of human capital, secondary education became available to all. It too was now part of mass schooling.

Today's secondary schools are quintessentially modernistic institutions. Characteristically immense in size, balkanized into a maze of bureaucratic *cubbyholes* known as subject departments, and precariously articulated by that geometric labyrinth known as the school timetable, secondary schools have struggled hard to protect opportunity and choice for swelling numbers of young people, but at significant cost. This has been a cost of impersonality and alienation for their students, and bureaucratic inflexibility and unresponsiveness to change among their staff. American secondary schools have been likened to shopping malls; British comprehensive schools to overcrowded airports.[20] The metaphors are not flattering. There is something about secondary schools as organizations which seems to mesh poorly with the academic, personal and social needs of their students, and

with the needs for fruitful professional development, continuous learning, and flexible decision making among their staff. Across the political spectrum, it is widely perceived that secondary schools in many countries are in severe crisis and in desperate need of restructuring.

The current crisis of secondary education is not just a problem of size, of impersonality or of inflexibility, though. It is not even a problem of failing to meet the economic challenges of global competitiveness. It is a problem, rather, of a balkanized, specialized, modernistic school system confronting the complex conditions of postmodernity. Secondary schools are both symbols and symptoms of the malaise of modernity. They are schools which have evolved massified, bureaucratic structures, unsympathetic to the dynamic and varying needs of a postmodern world: needs for more relevant and engaging student learning, for more continuous and connected professional development and for more flexible and inclusive decision-making. This, we have seen, is the fundamental problem which they and their teachers face.

A response to this crisis has been to try and construct some sense of wholeness in our threatened schools. Whole school curriculum development, whole school curriculum change and whole school commitments to missions and visions of educational purpose, are the symbols and realization of this process.[21] This quest for wholeness has been intended as an antidote to the chronic tendencies toward fragmentation and incoherence within the community and the curriculum.

According to recent writers, to be a member of a 'whole school' is to aspire to belong to a community, to share the same educational beliefs and aims, to work together as a team, to acknowledge and activate the complementary expertise of colleagues, to relate well to other members of the group, to be aware of and involved in classes beyond one's own, and to value the leadership of the school principal.[22] Although difficult to establish, whole school identities are nonetheless achievable in some elementary schools. Much of the widespread thrust toward stronger forms of teacher collaboration can be interpreted in this light. Even so, research suggests that the whole school project is only possible or likely under certain conditions: where the school is small, where it is predominantly middle class and not at all multicultural in its intake, and where the leadership is neo-feudal in

character, with a strong, visionary principal caring in a benevolently matriarchal or patriarchal way for a *family* of collaborating teachers.[23]

In larger, more complex schools, especially at the secondary level, whole school identity is more difficult, if not impossible to achieve. Size militates against it. So too do the complex and diverse constituencies that most secondary schools employ. And the historical and political strength of academic subjects as sources of personal identity, career aspiration and public accountability, means that most secondary schools continue to operate as micropolitical worlds, with conflict and competition between their departments being an endemic feature of their existence. Efforts to surpass these entrenched identities through principles and practices of curriculum and staff integration, appear to depend for their success on exceptional leadership, on the capacity to appoint energetic teachers committed to the innovative philosophy, and on the tolerance and support of the school district in allowing the school to operate in experimental ways. Progress towards establishing whole school secondary identities of a more innovative kind therefore, seems sustainable only as long as teachers stay, do not burn out, and continue to receive protection from their districts.[24]

In the absence of such exceptional conditions, we have seen that most secondary schools persist with or revert to balkanization by default or design. By default, through the collapse of innovation and the retreat to traditional subject identities. By design, when these identities are placed at the heart of newly constructed centralized curricula. The challenge for the secondary school of the postmodern age is how to construct a coherent sense of purpose that neither rests on the fruitless pursuit of whole school vision or identity, nor reverts to traditionally balkanized patterns of departmental conflict or indifference. It is a formidable challenge indeed.

If balkanization simply meant working and living in smaller groups, then the opposite of it might be imagined as being either individualism, or whole community attachment. But in our definitions and cases of balkanization, we have argued for different, more complex meanings than this. If balkanization is defined by strong and lasting boundaries, by personal identification with the territories they delineate, and by differences of power and status among these territories, then the opposites or antidotes to

balkanization will have very different meanings. What, in this sense, might debalkanized secondary school imply?

First, educational balkanization springs not only from difference but also from power and divisiveness. Debalkanizing secondary schools will in this sense require active and ongoing struggles to establish a balance and eradicate the differences in size, prestige and time allocation between high and low status subjects and the forms of knowledge and achievement they embody. Clearly, this is an issue that extends far beyond the individual school itself to the educational and social community outside it, where any such struggles to equalize and establish common value between rigour and relevance, academic and practical mentalities, and high and low status knowledge will challenge the interests of the powerful and not be ceded easily — even in the face of postindustrialism and global competitiveness. If equality of commitment is to be realistic and effective, it must be reflected in equality of budgets as well as equality of rhetoric. In this sense, one test of any North American secondary school's commitment to political debalkanization, is for it to see if it is prepared seriously to scale down its athletics budget and redistribute it to other extracurricular activities of supposedly equal value (theatre arts, band, computer club etc.).

Second, the departmental specialism of balkanized secondary schools will not, as we have seen, be easily or coherently replaced by structures that can support common identity, experience and consensus. The organizational antidote to balkanization, rather, might more properly be considered to be the kinetic collage or the moving mosaic. Here, large structures still understandably accommodate different groups and do not strive for unattainable goals of common experience and value consensus. What matters, rather, is that both the identity of the subgroups and memberships of them do not become fixed and entrenched. Subject departments may continue to exist but not always in their present form. They will also likely persist alongside other units and committees that evolve in response to continuing challenges — the Co-op (or school-work) education team, the school improvement team, the community links team and the like. In the moving mosaic, membership of subunits changes over time. Department leaderships carry no permanence, no institutional reward. They are elected,

or rotating and temporary. They carry no automatic promise of career advancement. They are neither conduits nor enclaves for school decision-making. The moving mosaic is an organizational structure that is gaining increasing strength outside the educational world as a way of enabling collaborative responsiveness to rapidly shifting pressures and challenges. If it is to be successfully accommodated in the world of secondary schools, then one essential sacrifice must be the institutionalized, career position of department leadership.

Third, in complex postmodern organizations, even though the identity and membership of subgroups may always be shifting, there will still be ongoing struggles of power, for status and around conflicting interests. If these are not to lead to new status hierarchies, to newly entrenched patterns of balkanization, then these conflicts will need to be clearly and ethically dealt with on an ongoing basis. In this sense, secondary schools, as aspiring postmodern organizations, will need not to repress conflicts, as many now do, but to discuss them and resolve them as a continuous process. Honest, democratic and ethical procedures for decision-making and conflict resolution are, in this sense, an essential component of the secondary schools of the future.

What is becoming disturbingly clear in our secondary schools is the inability of the present subject system and organizational structures to meet the needs of students in a postmodern society. To meet vital individual and societal needs, education of the future requires a radical reconceptualization of secondary schools and their curricula as we now know them.

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